

INSTALLATION ADDRESS



CELEBRATING THE LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITY:
PURSUING EXCELLENCE FOR IOWA

DR. MARTIN CHARLES JISCHKE

PRESIDENT

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

OCTOBER 13, 1991

INSTALLATION ADDRESS



CELEBRATING THE LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITY:
PURSUING EXCELLENCE FOR IOWA

DR. MARTIN CHARLES JISCHKE

PRESIDENT

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

OCTOBER 13, 1991

CELEBRATING THE LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITY: PURSUING EXCELLENCE FOR IOWA

Dr. Martin Charles Jischke

Thank you President Magrath and President Pomerantz. Governor Branstad, members of the Board of Regents, faculty, staff, students, alumni, friends of Iowa State University.

I begin my tenure as President of Iowa State University filled with enthusiasm and humility. I am enthused at the prospect of leading this university to even greater service; I am humbled at the responsibility of preserving the excellence that is here at Iowa State.

To all of you who love Iowa State, to our faculty, students, alumni and staff; to the people of Iowa; to all who are so justly proud of this university, I say to you: Iowa State University is your university—and now it is also mine.

This is a satisfying personal moment for me. I grew up as one of six children of a midwestern working class family in ordinary but nurturing circumstances. I am struck at the contrast of my childhood in Chicago with the splendor of today's ceremony. This is a rare honor and privilege that perhaps could only happen in this democracy at a land-grant university. My parents would have been proud to be part of this occasion.

My family with me here today is also proud to share this special moment. They are very important to me and important contributors to my educational life and to Iowa State University. I'd like to introduce my wife, Patty, and our children, Charles and Mary. And I'd like to introduce my sisters—Mary Jischke-Neville and Anne Sherwin—who are here with their families from Chicago, and Patty's sister, Nancy, who is here with her husband Doug from Maryland.

Permit me to introduce one more person—a man who has been my teacher, my friend, and my professional colleague—Professor Judson Baron of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Jud was my doctoral thesis advisor and has been a professorial inspiration to me for more than a quarter of a century.

CELEBRATING AN INSTITUTION

This ceremony signifies the beginning of a new and exciting journey for me. Although I am the 13th president of Iowa State and this is the 13th day of October, I consider myself a very lucky person. But today we celebrate an institution—not a lucky individual. Today we take time to treasure our past, gauge our progress, and articulate our dreams for the future.

It is important to pause occasionally for reflection and celebration. Surely, a community of learners joined together in the daily search for knowledge and wisdom is worthy of celebration. Surely, the wonderful contributions and accomplishments of Iowa State faculty, staff and students are worthy of celebration. Surely, the bold dreams of this great university are worthy of celebration.

Today we celebrate an idea—the idea of the university. It is a noble and ancient idea, an ever old and ever new idea, an idea in which we are all privileged to participate.

Today we celebrate the idea of the land-grant university, a remarkable and unique achievement of this democracy.

Today, we celebrate Iowa State University—its glorious past and its promising future.

THE LAND-GRANT TRADITION

On March 17, 1869, the vision of a new kind of education was brought to the prairie lands of central Iowa. The Iowa State Agricultural College and Model Farm was inaugurated with a charter from the Iowa Legislature, a grant of land from the federal government, and the generosity of private citizens from all around Iowa.

Those dreamers of yesterday could not begin to imagine the dramatic progress this university would realize in one hundred twenty-two years.

Today, Iowa State University is among the best of the 72 land-grant universities. We are proudly fulfilling the vision of Justin Morrill—a vision of a college that would be accessible to the children of the working classes, that would combine liberal and practical education, that would teach agriculture, the mechanic arts, and military science—a college that would serve the people of the state.

The legacy of Justin Morrill is a uniquely American philosophy of higher education.

Today, Iowa State University proudly continues that legacy.

Because of the land-grant legacy, our doors are open to all, regardless of gender, regardless of color, regardless of wealth. George Washington Carver and Carrie Chapman Catt are graduates of Iowa State University, a land-grant university.

The land-grant legacy changed what we learn.

Because of the land-grant legacy, in our classrooms and laboratories we teach business as well as botany, we teach engineering as well as English, we teach agriculture as well as art.

The land-grant legacy changed how we learn.

Because of the land-grant legacy, our students learn in classrooms and laboratories, in lecture halls and on farms, on campus and on field trips.

Because of the land-grant legacy, the tradition of the citizen soldier continues in this country—a tradition that serves our democracy well.

Most importantly, the land-grant legacy brought the university's knowledge to the people.

Because of the land-grant legacy, universities deliver new knowledge for practical purposes to the people of their states. Land-grant universities have a special obligation to the people—an obligation to extend knowledge and to serve.

Harold Enarson, former president of Ohio State University, said: "It is service in the deepest sense of the word that is the hallmark of the land-grant university."

Because of the land-grant legacy, universities reach out to the citizens of the state and share with them the fruits of their knowledge and research.

Because of the land-grant legacy, leaner animals are raised on a farm in southwest Iowa, healthier food is served in a home in central Iowa, and stronger equipment is made in a factory in northeast Iowa.

Because of the land-grant legacy, high quality corn and soybeans are raised throughout the United States, and data and messages travel by computer and FAX throughout the world.

The land-grant legacy—teaching, research and public service—has become a model for universities around the world. It is a distinctively American contribution to higher education. It is a truly remarkable achievement of this democracy.

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Iowa State University stands today as a superb example of the land-grant tradition. I come to Iowa State proud of its leading role among land-grant universities. I come to Iowa State and to Iowa sharing the values that make this place special.

Iowa State values are deeply rooted in the Midwest. Iowa State values are Iowa values. Iowans value hard work, competence and honesty. Iowans value service and outreach, neighbors helping neighbors. Iowans value justice, fairness, equity.

Iowans value—indeed, Iowans cherish—education. Education is a defining value of this state. The commitment to education in Iowa is strong and it is deep.

There is a refreshing modesty about Iowans, a tendency to understate, an inner confidence that does not require external confirmation. Iowans do not suffer privilege or pretension easily. There is a sensibleness, a penchant for the practical, a “real life with real values” feel about Iowa and Iowa State.

Iowans are deeply attached to the land. There is a strong sense of place, a rootedness in this rich, dark soil of my new state. It is no wonder the Native Americans graced the rolling hills and rich prairies of our state with the name Ioway—the place of the beautiful land.

These values are truly “land-grant” values. They permeate and define the university and the state—they are the basis for how and why we seek to be the premier land-grant university in this nation.

Iowa State University is a great university seeking to be the best. You, my friends, are essential to these aspirations—indeed, you will determine the success of this quest for excellence.

THE DISCIPLINE OF EXCELLENCE

Genuine excellence is no small goal. It does not come easily, cheaply, or quickly. Genuine excellence is achieved by a dogged determination; a daily commitment to learn, to create, to serve—a daily commitment to give the best of ourselves.

The climb toward excellence is easier in times of abundance. It is rockier and steeper
in times of scarcity.

A commitment to excellence cannot be imposed; it must come from within.

Excellence is not the destination, but the journey. It is not the arrival, but the voyage.
It is not perfection, but the seeking of perfection.

Iowa State is a great university with the opportunity to be the best.
The commitment must come from us.

Today, I make this commitment to you—I am willing to pay the price of excellence.
Join me in this commitment—a commitment to be the best land-grant university
in the nation.

A PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

As we seek excellence, we can take great pride in the accomplishments of the past. As
we seek to improve the university we love, we can celebrate the efforts and contributions
of those before us. I hope you share my pride in the Iowa State of today and yesterday,
for it springs from your accomplishments and your support.

A great university—especially a great land-grant university—is not static. We must
constantly question, reexamine, and change the ways we fulfill our educational mission.
Our legacy of practical and liberal education, access and service, make clear that we take
our direction from those we serve.

“Land-grant universities have prospered throughout their history,” says Enarson,
“because they joined their aspirations to the deepest needs and aspirations of the
American people. For over a century now, the people’s university has marched in step
with the people—involving itself in the people’s problems.”

Morrill’s vision of a people-serving university engaged in teaching, research and public
service will, in the future as in the past, be the bedrock of the enduring mission that
defines our university.

This uniquely American land-grant mission has served Iowa and the nation well.
It will serve Iowa and the nation well in the future.

LEARNING

Our basic mission at Iowa State University—indeed, at all universities—is learning. It informs and directs all we do—in teaching, in research, in public service. We make our greatest contribution to the future by educating the citizens of tomorrow.

“...the highest, most promising, most urgent form of service in the land-grant mission is neither research nor public service,” Enarson says. “It is education, specifically undergraduate education. If land-grant universities—indeed, all universities—fail at this primary task, nothing they do in research or in attempts to alleviate social ills will count for much.”

We have a special responsibility to provide an excellent and enduring education to the young people, and those not so young, who come to us to learn. We must find ways to assure ourselves and the public that students are learning, that students are well-served, particularly in our undergraduate programs. Iowa State has been, and is, a great teaching institution. Our commitment to superior teaching will not diminish, not now nor in the future.

Let us not forget the origins of the land-grant university—this marriage of practical and liberal education. Both are crucial; neither is ascendant. We live in a rapidly changing world in which practical knowledge and skills need constant renewal.

Liberal education, however, is sustaining, is enduring, is liberating. It frees us to communicate precisely, to think clearly, and to appreciate truth and beauty.

In the rush to teach the latest science with the newest practice, let us not overlook the need to develop in our students the habits of mind and attitudes that allow learning for a lifetime. This is more than a call for strong foundations in liberal and practical education. This is a plea for cultivating in ourselves and our students a sense of curiosity, a joy of knowing, a lifelong enthusiasm for learning. The ability to learn what can be is at least as important as the knowledge of what is.

Learning—especially at a land-grant university—is more than a classroom activity. Through our distinctive research and public service missions, we learn on the farms, in the homes, in the factories, throughout the state. We learn in Ames, in Iowa, in the Soviet Union and Costa Rica. Our research and service missions provide unique opportunities for learning for our students, for our faculty.

This learning environment—now, more than ever—must include diverse peoples and ideas and opinions. We cannot fulfill our responsibilities to our students without a diverse environment.

That environment must include the tolerance—indeed, the encouragement—of diverse ideas. By letting the full diversity of voices and opinions be heard, we preserve that most treasured of academic traditions—the reasoned and civilized examination of complex and often difficult ideas.

There is no creed at a university save our belief in truth, our faith in honesty, and our commitment to the pursuit of knowledge for the betterment of society. As a community of scholars, we must foster open and thoughtful discussion of ideas—even outrageous, unpopular ideas. It is only in the light of reasoned and civilized debate that we better understand what is true and what is false.

Thomas Jefferson, in describing his University of Virginia, said: “This institution will be based on the illimitable freedom of the human mind. For here we are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead, nor to tolerate any error so long as reason is left free to combat it.”

Freedom—reason—civility. These must be part of—these must define—our university. These must be evident in our behavior.

Let us conduct ourselves in a manner that edifies our students. They will imitate the behavior we display and the values we teach.

RESEARCH AND EXTENSION

Education—real learning—remains the bedrock of this university. That learning includes research, and the extension of that research to serve the needs of the people.

Basic research is the foundation of our research mission. It sustains, rejuvenates and energizes. Basic research for its own sake is not a squandering of resources—but an investment in knowledge and the solutions of tomorrow.

The nature of the competition our nation faces makes clear the importance of the applied research mission of universities like Iowa State. Applied research plays a growing role in generating the knowledge that is the basis for new industries and new economic opportunities.

Iowa State University has a long history of major contributions to the agricultural economy in Iowa. Iowa State is uniquely positioned to contribute to a technology-driven economy of the future.

The research of today, conducted largely in universities, will determine this state's, this nation's, economic strength for tomorrow. Iowa State, as a land-grant university, has a special role to play. Through extension, technology development, and technology transfer, we serve the needs of existing Iowa enterprises, we foster new industries, and we share these educational resources as widely as possible. The extension of the university—applying knowledge to the problems of the people—is what is distinctive about our land-grant mission.

THE PUBLIC TRUST

As we recommit ourselves to learning—learning through teaching, research and public service—we must ensure that we warrant the trust of those we serve. Universities, I fear, are losing that public trust. Universities are falling from grace.

I do not speak of fiscal grace, for budgets are fleeting and often imprecise reflections of the public's confidence. Rather, I speak of the people's faith that what we do is for the good of all, of the people's trust that we will carry out our task in a manner that serves society well.

Too much of what is written today about universities calls into question our commitment to these basic educational purposes. From the criticisms of undergraduate teaching, to the questions of indirect cost charges and research fraud, to the private pecuniary interests of some in our midst, universities are increasingly seen as losing the high ground of public trust and confidence that is essential to our success.

Universities—especially land-grant universities—exist to serve society. We do not exist to serve our own interests. We exist to advance—through education—the larger public purposes of our state, our nation and our world.

We exist because the wise and generous people of Iowa saw the possibility of enhancing the human condition through education. We exist because of the faith and the trust of the people of Iowa.

This social compact between the people and their university is fragile. Each generation must renew its commitment. For a university is ultimately a promise, a hope, an act of faith. It is the gift of one generation to the next.

RENEWING OUR COMMITMENT

I call on all of us today to renew our commitment to the noble public purposes
for which this university exists.

To the people of Iowa and our alumni, I ask that you continue to be generous in your
financial support and that your faith in the promise of education, your belief that
knowledge is better than ignorance, remain steadfast. Above all else, do not lose faith in
the wisdom of this public venture in education to which we all contribute
and from which we all gain.

To the faculty and staff, I ask for your continued commitment to your work here and for
a recognition of the necessity of the people's trust and confidence in our work.

Without that trust and confidence, we will fail. With it, we will excel.

Let us inspire ourselves, our students, our state, our society. Let us take pride and joy in
the idea of a university—particularly this university. Let us be good stewards of this
educational treasure called Iowa State University.

To the students, I ask for your recognition that you are the beneficiaries of a generous
state and a generous nation. Take advantage of your learning opportunities, use them
wisely, and be prepared to pass on the opportunities to others, in their time.

You cannot do more; you should not do less.

THE UNIVERSITY

John Masfield's beautiful poem titled "The University" expresses my feeling of gratitude
at being part of this noble enterprise of learning and serving.

"There are few earthly things more beautiful than a university.

"It is a place where those who hate ignorance may strive to know, where those who
perceive truth may strive to make others see; where seekers and learners alike, banded
together in the search for knowledge, will honor thought in all its finer ways, will
welcome thinkers in distress or in exile, will uphold ever the dignity of thought and
learning and will exact standards in these things.

"They give young people that close companionship for which youth longs, and that
chance of the endless discussion of the themes which are endless—without which youth
would seem a waste of time.

"There are few earthly things more splendid than a university.

"In these days of broken frontiers and collapsing values. . .wherever a University stands, it stands and shines; wherever it exists. . .free minds. . .urged on to full and fair inquiry, may still bring wisdom into human affairs."

PLEDGE

I pledge to you today, to all the people of Iowa, my commitment to the idea and the reality of a university—and most especially, to this land-grant university.

I pledge my energies—mental, physical and emotional—
to leading Iowa State University to the excellence it aspires to—to leading
Iowa State to be the best land-grant university in the nation.

Join me today in a recommitment to learning. Join me in a recommitment to the idea of
a land-grant university—to acquiring, preserving and using knowledge—
a recommitment to a university in which learning is at the heart of all we do.
Join me in celebrating the beauty and splendor of this—our university.